

CLAIMS

We claim:

1 1. A method of correlating a purchaser of an electronically-purchased item ("EPI")
2 with the EPI, said EPI to be subsequently received by said purchaser, comprising:

3 a purchasing step, wherein purchaser-related financial information is transferred to
4 a seller of said EPI and verification-related digital certificate information is transferred
5 from said seller to said purchaser; and

6 a verification step, wherein said purchaser and said EPI are correlated by requiring
7 said purchaser to provide said verification-related digital certificate information before
8 receiving said EPI and by electronically comparing said verification-related digital
9 certificate information with said EPI.

1 2. The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein said purchasing step includes at least
2 the steps of:

3 creating an electronically-readable indicia corresponding to said verification-related
4 digital certificate information; and

5 associating said electronically-readable indicia with said EPI.

1 3. The method as set forth in claim 2, wherein said verification step comprises:

electronically reading said verification-related digital certificate information from said electronically-readable indicia into a verification system prior to receiving said EPI; and

comparing said read verification-related digital certificate information with verification-related digital certificate information provided by a person attempting to receive the EPI.

4. The method as set forth in claim 3, wherein the EPI is authorized to be released to said person attempting to receive the EPI only after the EPI is confirmed to have associated therewith verification-related digital certificate information corresponding to the verification-related digital certificate information provided by said receiving party.

5. The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital certificate information comprises a self-signed certificate generated by said seller.

6. The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital certificate information comprises a data file containing encrypted data pertaining to said EPI.

1 7. The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information comprises a self-signed certificate generated by said seller and a
3 data file containing data pertaining to said EPI.

1 8. The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information is generated by a server under the control of the seller and is stored
3 on a smart card.

1 9. The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information is generated by a server under the control of the seller and is stored
3 on a PDA.

1 10. The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information is generated by a server under the control of the seller and is stored
3 on a cellular telephone.

1 11. The method as set forth in claim 2, wherein said electronically-readable indicia
2 comprises bar coding.

1 12. A method of correlating a purchased redeemable ticket with the purchaser of
2 the redeemable ticket, comprising:

3 a purchasing step, wherein purchaser-related financial information is transferred to
4 a seller of said redeemable ticket and verification-related digital certificate information is
5 transferred to said purchaser; and

6 a verification step, wherein said purchaser and said redeemable ticket are correlated
7 by requiring said purchaser to provide said verification-related digital certificate
8 information before receiving said redeemable ticket and by electronically comparing said
9 verification-related digital certificate information with said redeemable ticket.

1 13. The method as set forth in claim 12, wherein said purchasing step includes
2 at least the steps of:

3 creating an electronically-readable indicia corresponding to said verification-related
4 digital certificate information; and

5 associating said electronically-readable indicia with said redeemable ticket.

1 14. The method as set forth in claim 13, wherein said verification step comprises:

2 electronically reading said verification-related digital certificate information from
3 said electronically-readable indicia into a verification system prior to receiving said
4 redeemable ticket; and

5 comparing said read verification-related digital certificate information with
6 verification-related digital certificate information provided by a person attempting to
7 receive the redeemable ticket.

1 15. The method as set forth in claim 14, wherein the redeemable ticket is
2 authorized to be released to said person attempting to receive the redeemable ticket only
3 after the redeemable ticket is confirmed to have associated therewith verification-related
4 digital certificate information corresponding to the verification-related digital certificate
5 information provided by said receiving party.

1 16. The method as set forth in claim 15, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information comprises a self-signed certificate generated by said seller.

1 17. The method as set forth in claim 15, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information comprises a data file containing encrypted data pertaining to said
3 redeemable ticket.

1 18. The method as set forth in claim 15, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information comprises a self-signed certificate generated by said seller and a
3 data file containing data pertaining to said redeemable ticket.

1 19. The method as set forth in claim 15, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information is generated by a server under the control of the seller and is stored
3 on a smart card.

1 20. The method as set forth in claim 15, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information is generated by a server under the control of the seller and is stored
3 on a PDA.

1 21. The method as set forth in claim 15, wherein said verification-related digital
2 certificate information is generated by a server under the control of the seller and is stored
3 on a cellular telephone.

1 22. The method as set forth in claim 13, wherein said electronically-readable
2 indicia comprises bar coding.